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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1830 (2008)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 1830 (2008), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on a quarterly basis on the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the third submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the previous report (S/2009/102), dated 20 February 2009, with a focus on the steps taken to implement resolution 1830 (2008). It presents a summary of key political developments during the period under review, as well as regional and international events concerning Iraq. The report also provides an update on the activities of my Special Representative for Iraq, as well as on operational and security matters.

II. Summary of key political and security developments in Iraq

3. On 6 March, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki renewed calls for national reconciliation, including the need for outreach to former Baath Party cadres and officials. Sunni Vice-President Tariq al-Hashemi stressed that the reconciliation process required time and entailed incentives, including the possibility of more powers through constitutional amendments for the Sunni constituency to overcome years of mistrust and fully take part in the political process.

4. The reconciliation process remains delicate and during the reporting period was marked by discontent among elements of the Awakening Councils and members of the Sons of Iraq regarding the non-payment of salaries and the incorporation of their members into the Iraqi Security Forces and other Government structures. Declining oil revenues have contributed to the problem, forcing the Government to drastically reduce its 2009 budget and freeze police recruitment. Tensions flared on 28 March when a prominent Awakening Council leader in central Baghdad was arrested for allegedly having been involved in sectarian violence in the past. However, although other Awakening Councils expressed concern about the arrest, the individual in question reportedly did not have wide support among Council leaders.

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5. Ayad al-Samarrai, a Tawafuq nominee (and Vice-President al-Hashemi's deputy in the Iraqi Islamic Party), was elected the new Speaker of Parliament during a parliamentary session held at the Council of Representatives on 19 April. This brought to a close the four-month political impasse that followed the resignation of the previous Speaker, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, in December 2008. The new programme set out by the Speaker of Parliament includes accelerating the approval of pending legislation, promoting the Parliament's supervisory role, advancing preparations for the forthcoming parliamentary elections and ensuring closer follow-up of the affairs of independent commissions. The programme also includes completing outstanding tasks assigned to the Council of Representatives such as amendments to the Constitution and the work of various parliamentary committees, to include the committee considering article 23 of the provincial elections law, which has been tasked by the Council with finding a power-sharing formula prior to the provincial elections in Kirkuk.

6. The formal release of governorate election results by the Independent High Electoral Commission on 26 March set in motion the process of the formation of provincial councils in the 14 governorates where elections took place on 31 January 2009, including the selection of all governors and deputies for each province. In the central governorates, larger majorities were won, which made it easier for alliances to be forged and the allocation of senior posts to be concluded more quickly. In some southern governorates, the vote was split, making it more difficult for the newly elected Council members to reach a consensus.

7. Muthanna was the last Governorate to form its provincial council, with its new governor selected on 30 April. In Najaf, the Legal Committee of the Iraqi parliament has challenged the manner in which the governor was selected and there are indications that the issue might be settled by the Iraqi Supreme Court. In Ninawa, there is an ongoing dispute between the Kurdish-led Ninawa Fraternal List and the new al-Hadbaa List, which won the January provincial elections. Kurdish members of the provincial council are boycotting council meetings and have demanded that more posts be allocated for Kurds in the provincial government. On 8 May, the newly elected Governor from the al-Hadbaa List was blocked by Kurdish Peshmerga forces from attending a sports event in the Bashiqah subdistrict, leading to accusations on both sides. In response, the Governor and his supporters have demanded that the Kurdistan regional government withdraw its forces from all disputed areas in Ninawa. The situation remains a matter of serious concern.

8. Although the overall security situation in Iraq has improved since 2008, the recent spike in indiscriminate and violent mass attacks continues to cause unacceptably high civilian casualties, demonstrating that important security challenges remain. A new wave of suicide bombings took place, culminating in a coordinated series of four bomb blasts across Iraq on 23 March that resulted in at least 32 people dead and scores wounded. There were nearly 20 suicide bombings in April, with 355 Iraqis killed, making it the deadliest month in 2009, according to Iraqi officials. More than 80 Iranian pilgrims were also reportedly killed during the same month. On 20 May, a car bomb in north-west Baghdad killed 40 people and injured more than 70, followed the next day by a series of bombings in Baghdad and Kirkuk that killed at least 23 people and injured many more.

III. Activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

A. Political activities

9. During the reporting period, the activities of my Special Representative and the Mission focused with renewed urgency on the issue of the disputed internal boundaries of Iraq, with a view to promoting political dialogue between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan regional government. As part of that effort, UNAMI completed a set of analytical reports on the disputed internal boundaries of northern Iraq, which was presented on 22 April to the Presidency Council of Iraq, the Prime Minister of Iraq and the President of the Kurdistan regional government. The reports, which took over a year to complete, were prepared following consultations with a wide range of Iraqi interlocutors, including senior Government officials and Members of Parliament. High-level consultations with Iraqi partners on the content and nature of the reports intensified in early April, ahead of its official submission. Subsequent briefings took place with the relevant parliamentary committees, including the article 23 committee, the article 140 committee and the Constitutional Review Committee.

10. Fifteen separate reports have been prepared on districts in four governorates across northern Iraq from the border with the Syrian Arab Republic to the border with the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Sinjar, Tal Afar, Til Kaef, Sheikhan, Akre, Hamdaniya and Makhmur districts in Ninawa Governorate; Al Hawija, Dibis, Daquq and Kirkuk districts in Kirkuk Governorate; Tuz district in Salahadin Governorate; and Kifri and Khanaqin, as well as the subdistrict of Mandali in Baladruz district, in Diyala Governorate. The overall product was the result of in-depth research into current conditions and competing narratives along mutually reinforcing lines of enquiry, carried out in close public consultation with various Iraqi authorities at the national, regional, governorate and local levels. Each district assessment contains recommendations on specific localized confidence-building measures and aims to provide the basis for further dialogue between Iraqi parties, including in support of local processes. Given that the lack of administrative clarity has caused a significant lack of service delivery in those areas, the analysis is also supported by a mapping of basic developmental needs.

11. Analytical rather than prescriptive in nature, the reports make no specific suggestions regarding the future administrative jurisdiction of these areas. The findings do not prejudice sovereign Iraqi processes already under way and are consistent with elements of the Constitution of Iraq. They further acknowledge that these sensitive issues cannot be dealt with in isolation and require the goodwill and firm commitment of the federal and regional governments to start a process of sustained dialogue not only on territorial matters, but also on broader security, revenue-sharing and constitutional issues.

12. The report included a discussion paper on the status of Kirkuk, for which UNAMI has offered four options, all of which use the Constitution of Iraq as the starting point for handling Kirkuk. The options treat the governorate as a single entity and require a political agreement among the parties over a transitional period which could then be endorsed by way of a confirmatory referendum.

13. During the reporting period, my Special Representative and the UNAMI political team reached out to a number of senior Iraqi political figures, Members of

Parliament, and independent and other provincial representatives from Kirkuk to discuss power-sharing in Kirkuk as well as developments in parts of Ninawa and Diyala. The Mission also engaged international partners that have consistently displayed strong and active support for the United Nations political initiative, with a view to reducing tensions.

14. In parallel, and at the request of the Speaker of Parliament, UNAMI continued to support the parliamentary committee on Kirkuk set up according to article 23 of the provincial elections law. UNAMI has been facilitating the work of the committee by providing secretariat, logistical and substantive support, as well as bringing in experts to advise the Committee on power-sharing, property claims and voter registration. The article 23 committee sought an extension of its mandate on 1 April for an additional two months to deliver its findings to the Parliament. While there seems to be an understanding in principle regarding the allocation of the top three posts of the provincial council, the allocation of lower-level government posts based on the ethnic quota system and a time frame for the implementation of a power-sharing agreement have yet to be agreed upon. Early in May, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs accompanied the members of the committee, as well as security chiefs from Kirkuk and members of the Provincial Council, to Northern Ireland. The purpose was to help the Kirkuki delegation learn about the experience of Northern Ireland and lessons that could be applicable to Kirkuk, in particular in the areas of power-sharing, policing reform and the constitutional status of the province in the light of the Good Friday Agreement and Northern Ireland's linkages to two separate entities.

B. Regional dialogue

Regional developments

15. The reporting period witnessed a number of high-level visits to Iraq, which served to further strengthen bilateral contacts between Iraq and its neighbours. On 27 February, President Jalal Talabani led a delegation to Tehran, followed by visits to Baghdad by the former President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Larijani. On 7 March, President Talabani visited Ankara; then, on 23 March, the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, visited Baghdad. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, visited Baghdad in February and April, respectively. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Walid al-Moualem, visited on 25 March. On 21 March the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amr Moussa, visited Baghdad and promised a more active role by the League in the areas of national reconciliation, electoral preparation and reconstruction in Iraq. Those visits underscore the fact that a concerted effort is under way to strengthen bilateral relations between the Government of Iraq and its neighbours.

16. As a result of recent security improvements and political advances in Iraq, as well as its relations with its neighbours, the Government of Iraq officially announced that it did not intend to continue with the multilateral regional dialogue mechanism on Iraq, but would rather develop its regional relations on a bilateral basis. Consequently, UNAMI continued to engage with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Prime Minister to discuss ways of advancing the

regional integration of Iraq, including by integrating regional engagement into the new priorities of the International Compact for Iraq.

17. UNAMI also provided ongoing support to initiatives aimed at advancing bilateral cooperation with the neighbours of Iraq. Its proposal to advance a joint mine clearance project between Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran led to the setting up of a demining and drug coordination committee on the Iraqi side, which has held several meetings since February, as well as the creation of a bilateral demining committee between the two countries. The Mission also continued to provide assistance to the High-level Coordinator for the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains and the return of all Kuwaiti property by developing, with the Ministry of Human Rights of Iraq, a capacity-building project on grave exhumations. Support has also been provided to the Iraq-Kuwait boundary maintenance project, established in accordance with Security Council resolution 833 (1993) and led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, by following up with Iraqi interlocutors on preparations for the next boundary maintenance campaign, scheduled to commence in September. The United Nations is also involved in discussions with Iraqi interlocutors and other stakeholders on the implementation of paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 1859 (2008), as part of a Secretariat-wide effort to review all resolutions pertaining to Iraq adopted since 1990.

18. During the reporting period, UNAMI remained actively engaged with regional players, with my Special Representative paying official visits to the Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and my Deputy Special Representative to Turkey, to discuss United Nations activities in Iraq and ways of promoting greater regional cooperation and increased engagement by the country's neighbours.

C. Constitutional support activities

19. As part of an ongoing effort to facilitate dialogue on unresolved constitutional issues, the UNAMI Office of Constitutional Support held a round-table discussion with Iraqi policymakers on 7 and 8 April to consider hydrocarbon management in the context of a federal system. A similar round table was organized in Erbil, with a broader pool of participants. Discussions focused on the evolution of federalism in Iraq, central versus regional competencies on oil contracting, an effective national regime on revenue-sharing, and the unblocking of the hydrocarbon legislation in order to stimulate much-needed foreign investment. In order to build further momentum on these outstanding issues and to support both the national political reconciliation and economic development processes, it was agreed that an expanded conference on federalism and hydrocarbon management would be held in mid-June, hosted by the Council of Representatives with assistance from UNAMI and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

D. Electoral assistance activities

20. On 26 March the Independent High Electoral Commission announced the final certified results for the 31 January governorate council elections. The announcement completed the process of the final adjudication of electoral appeals by the Electoral Judicial Panel, an independent judicial body appointed by the Iraqi Court of

Cassation, and paved the way for the inauguration of new governorate councils and elections for new governors and their deputies.

21. Despite widespread public outreach efforts to ensure that voters knew where to go to vote, 1,428 individual complaints were filed with the Independent High Electoral Commission concerning the voter list (77 per cent of the total 1,856 election-day complaints). Notably, no complaints were submitted by political parties regarding any pervasive errors in the final voter list. The announcement of the preliminary results just five days after polling saw few significant challenges to the credibility of the process, with the notable exception of the complaints raised by the Anbar Awakening Council, which led to the Commission sending an investigatory team to the governorate; the team found the complaint to be unsubstantiated. Additional complaints in Diyala and Ninawa regarding ballot-stuffing allegations led the Commission to annul the results from a number of polling stations. Three candidates were replaced as a result of the Commission's investigation. Ultimately, the Electoral Judicial Panel ruled in favour of the Electoral Commission on each of a total of 593 appeals, dismissing all appeals against the final results.

22. UNAMI has, meanwhile, continued its support for the Independent High Electoral Commission in preparation for a series of upcoming electoral activities, starting with the regional presidential and parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan regional government region, now scheduled for 25 July, and culminating with the Council of Representatives elections in all 18 governorates at the end of 2009 or early in 2010. Following the adoption of the legal framework by the current Kurdistan National Assembly, negotiations have been under way to finalize the budgetary needs. The Electoral Commission technically requires a 90-day preparatory period upon receipt of the budget in order to conduct a credible and accepted election. In this regard, it is noted that the Commission continues to face difficulties in obtaining funds in a timely manner from the Iraqi authorities to implement election activities. This issue must be addressed if the Council of Representatives elections and the nationwide voter registration exercise are to take place as planned.

23. In parallel with technical assistance on operational activities, UNAMI has encouraged the undertaking of a number of lessons-learned exercises to further improve the work of the Independent High Electoral Commission and its operational preparedness for future electoral events. Emphasis is placed in particular on the need for improvements to be made to the national voter list and on its accuracy at the district and subdistrict levels. It is hoped that a comprehensive voter registration update exercise can be undertaken beginning 1 August.

E. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

24. The recent election of new provincial authorities offers an opportunity to strengthen local governance by making provincial councils accountable for improving living standards in their respective jurisdictions. Several media polls and United Nations surveys over the reporting period indicate that the need to improve the security situation, until recently the main priority for Iraqis, has been overtaken by increased demand for social services and employment. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are being asked to review their priorities to better assist the Government in this regard.

25. The closure of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq to new contributions, agreed at the 8th meeting of the Donor Committee of the Facility, held on 18 February in Naples, Italy, also marks the start of a significant transition for United Nations assistance in Iraq. Contributions to the Facility will cease as at 30 June 2009, with no new projects approved beyond 31 December 2009 and no new contractual commitments after 31 December 2010. The contribution of the United Nations to the recovery of Iraq through the Facility was acknowledged by an independent report released at Naples, commissioned by the Donor Committee of the Facility. It confirmed that $1.3 billion, channelled through the Facility to the United Nations, had delivered tangible, physical goods which had improved the lives of the beneficiaries, despite an often difficult operating environment. Donors and the Government of Iraq also welcomed the improved coherence in United Nations programming inside Iraq. I warmly thank the Facility's 25 donor nations for their support to the Fund, notably the European Commission, Japan, Spain, Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Particular appreciation is due to the Government of Italy for its able chairmanship of the Facility for the past two years and to the Government of Denmark for taking up this role in 2009.

26. Drawing on the lessons learned from the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, Iraq will now enter a new phase of bilateral international assistance. I welcome the decision taken at the Naples meeting to explore options to continue the excellent donor, United Nations and governmental coordination fostered by the Facility. This is critical in order to ensure ownership, accountability and transparency of aid, as called for by the Paris Declaration. To assist in this process, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes decided this quarter to embark on a full United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Iraq from 2011 to 2014, an approach formally endorsed by the Government of Iraq in April and which is in line with the National Development Strategy of Iraq. The Framework will be a significant evolution from the current United Nations Assistance Strategy for Iraq and justly recognizes the ongoing transition of Iraq towards a more stable development trajectory.

27. Iraq still faces considerable socio-economic challenges. Its budget deficit in 2009 is projected at 27 per cent, or $15.9 billion (the highest in the past six years). Poverty is also an ongoing issue. The Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey, released in January 2009 by the World Bank and the Government of Iraq, confirms that 13 per cent of all Iraqis have a monthly per capita income of less than $51; in rural areas, the rate is 26 per cent. It also underlined problems with municipal services in many areas. For example, 71 per cent of Iraqis have no municipal garbage collection, and only 12 per cent of household water connections are deemed reliable. An analysis of the country's labour force in January showed that 450,000 young people were likely to enter the workforce in 2009, with limited employment opportunities. Those findings suggest that there is a need to provide increased assistance to the provincial councils in setting development targets, planning sectoral strategies and improving budget execution.

28. Meanwhile, despite a recent spike in violence, Iraq continues to see displaced families returning at a steady pace and looking to reintegrate into former communities or seek areas where they feel more secure. By the end of the reporting period, the number of families that had returned since early 2008 had reached nearly 50,000. The vast majority of returns are internally displaced persons, with

approximately 70 per cent having returned within the same governorate, and only 11 per cent having come from abroad. Their decision on whether to return and reintegrate in Iraq appears to have been influenced largely by the security situation and the availability of jobs and services, as well as assurances of legal protections and property rights. Reports indicate that at least 39 per cent of internally displaced persons do not currently wish to return to their place of origin, and humanitarian surveys indicate that, in some instances, they may not be worse off than other Iraqi poor. Surveys carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Syrian Arab Republic and in Jordan indicate that up to 80 per cent of those interviewed have no intention of returning to Iraq. Those findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive plan for local job creation, in addition to direct assistance to returnees, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants. The United Nations, primarily through UNHCR and other partners, continued to support the efforts of Iraq in protecting, monitoring and assisting returns over the reporting period.

29. The United Nations aims to tackle those complex issues through a comprehensive approach, with large-scale programmes funded through the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq and geared towards the International Compact for Iraq, both to develop the policy environment for private- and State-sector reforms and to promote community-level service delivery and employment. During the past quarter, through the private sector development programme (valued at $30 million), the United Nations, in partnership with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, supported the efforts of Iraq to reform State-owned enterprises. Development of the public sector reform and decentralization of essential services programme (valued at $60 million) is also now fully under way, with the United Nations supporting the Office of the Prime Minister and Government ministries to modernize the country's civil service and administrative structures.

30. International coordination is essential to the success of such initiatives, particularly as the International Compact for Iraq ends its second year of implementation. In 2009, Prime Minister al-Maliki has stressed the need to update the Compact to reflect the country's new realities. The meeting of the Executive Committee of the Compact in April highlighted the importance of the Compact as a tool to identify development priorities that should have international support. However, such areas must be clearly defined and aligned with the country's socio-economic priorities. In that regard, my Special Adviser on the International Compact for Iraq, Ibrahim Gambari, initiated a review to refocus the Compact and visited Baghdad from 24 to 27 May, where he held extensive consultations with the leadership of Iraq, including Prime Minister al-Maliki, Vice-President Abdul Mahdi and Vice-President al-Hashemi. During his stay, he also co-chaired the meeting of the Baghdad Coordination Group with the Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Saleh, on 26 May to present the achievements of the Compact to date and to discuss a future course. Further to his engagement with the Government of Iraq and the donor community, there was an agreement at the Coordination Group to refocus the Compact along specific pillars. The Government of Iraq should advance domestic reforms on the Compact agenda, while the Compact framework would deliver capacity-building and enable economic diplomacy with a view to encouraging foreign investment, trade and economic integration. A preparatory working group

was established to develop a detailed plan to be presented at the forthcoming review conference, scheduled for later in 2009.

31. The country's 2009 population and housing census, scheduled to be held sometime this year, represents the country's first opportunity since 1997 to establish baselines on population demographics in relation to national and global development goals. Initial discussions have begun and, in support of the Government, the United Nations Population Fund hosted a conference on census planning and quality assurance on 23 January in conjunction with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and in partnership with the Iraq Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (with its counterpart in the Iraqi Kurdistan region).

32. Emergency relief operations by the United Nations and its partners also continued to address disease outbreaks, food insecurity and chronic deprivation. The first quarter of 2009 saw the continuation of a measles outbreak that began in 2008, with 13,679 cases reported across the country, resulting in the deaths of at least 35 children and placing many more at risk. In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) received more than $1 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to mobilize an emergency immunization campaign, in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to contain the outbreak in five affected governorates. UNICEF also continued to provide emergency assistance to 68 of the country's most vulnerable subdistricts, which are home to 1.6 million people, addressing, inter alia, the issues of improved access to water, sanitation, health care, education and psychosocial support. Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided food assistance to about 630,000 internally displaced persons countrywide.

33. Funding for humanitarian operations such as the ones mentioned above remains a challenge. I thank those donors that have contributed to the 2009 consolidated appeal process for Iraq and the region, which is requesting approximately $355 million for humanitarian assistance to Iraqi refugees living abroad and $192 million for the most vulnerable inside the country. Overall, the 2009 Iraq Consolidated Appeal is currently funded at about 43 per cent, but additional support will be required to address the remaining humanitarian gaps. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat renewed the charter of the Expanded Humanitarian Response Fund, which was recently replenished with $15 million from the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, in order to better support the work of Iraqi relief organizations. The Office has trained more than 40 Iraqi organizations to better access funds from the Fund.

34. Persistent environmental hazards are also resulting in humanitarian and development challenges. Iraq is facing another year of drought after low winter rainfall in many areas, which threatens its environment and agriculture. Dwindling natural water sources are compounding the problem. The Deputy Minister of Water Resources noted this quarter that only 32 per cent of the country's water is locally sourced, leaving Iraq greatly dependent on its neighbours. The flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq is diminishing, with the reduction in water quantity also affecting water quality. Agriculture and power production are also affected, with projects to irrigate large tracts of farmland and build additional power stations under threat because of water shortages. The Ministry of Agriculture reported in March that Iraq is using only 50 per cent of its arable land owing to lack of irrigation and

poor soil quality. I encourage Iraq and its neighbours to urgently pursue international dialogue to determine solutions for the country's shared waterways.

35. During the period, the United Nations country team launched two new major joint programmes with the Government of Iraq. The Government of Iraq/United Nations Marshlands Initiative brings together the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the aim of offering a strategic, capacity-development-oriented programme to regenerate this unique environment, improve social services and generate economic development. The initiative includes a commitment by the Minister for the Marshlands and includes an allocation of $5 million from Ministry resources in co-financing. WFP, WHO, UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also launched the Renewed Efforts against Child Hunger initiative in Iraq, aimed at ending child hunger and malnutrition and at developing a national system for monitoring the impact of rising food prices.

36. The second report of Iraq on the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was prepared with the support of UNDP and UNICEF. Since the previous report, UNDP, UNICEF and international non-governmental organizations have assisted Iraq in clearing 20 square kilometres of land and in providing more than 276,600 people with mine-awareness training. Civilian demining in Iraq was halted across the country during the reporting period and placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence. Given the major humanitarian and economic implications of mines and unexploded ordnance in Iraq, the United Nations has requested that civilian demining be resumed urgently.

37. UNDP also completed the Iraqi Legal Database and selected the Erbil investigating court to be established as a model court under a rule-of-law programme. Together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNDP conducted a needs assessment on institutional compliance and the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

38. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme assisted the Government in the development of a comprehensive national housing policy to improve housing conditions and tackle the chronic housing shortage. WHO also completed a training programme for medical teams across Iraq to strengthen the delivery of blood-transfusion services. WHO and UNICEF met with the Health Ministry of Iraq to begin updating the country's maternal and child health strategy. UNICEF completed the rehabilitation of 14 schools and distributed educational supplies to almost 20,000 primary-school pupils. The rehabilitation by UNDP of five turbine units at the Mosul and Taji Gas power stations increased power supply to the national grid by an average of nearly 80 megawatts.

39. In line with the United Nations commitment to further gender equality and gender parity, the Organization initiated a gender strategy with the Government of Iraq focusing on the status of Iraqi women in society (constitutional guarantees, employment participation and protection). The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) hosted a conference in Istanbul, with the participation of the Government of Iraq, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, to help the Government meet its obligations under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. UNICEF, as part of a systematic approach to

the monitoring and reporting of grave child rights violations, trained more than 400 Iraqis on the prevention of violence against children and young people, particularly girls. The United Nations appreciates the engagement of the Government and civil society on this critical issue for the future of Iraq.

F. Human rights activities

40. On 29 April UNAMI issued its fourteenth report on the human rights situation in the country, covering the period from July to December 2008. The report, produced in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), notes that, although the period covered was characterized by further improvements in the area of security, the overall human rights situation in Iraq remains a matter of concern. The report describes a range of human rights abuses and reiterates that security will be sustainable only if additional steps are taken to strengthen the rule of law and end impunity. The report also acknowledges the important institutional and legal developments during the reporting period. In addition, the report shows that gender-based violence remains one of the key unaddressed problems throughout Iraq.

41. UNAMI remains concerned about the continuing deficiencies in the administration of justice and the rule-of-law sector. The application of anti-terrorism legislation raised additional concerns following the Government's announcement that it intends to resume executions and hang 128 inmates in the second quarter of 2009. UNAMI is also particularly concerned about the current practice of relying heavily on confessions in criminal trial proceedings and harsh interrogation procedures that may amount, in some cases, to torture. In the light of those concerns, UNAMI continued to engage the Iraqi authorities in discussions regarding the country's obligations under international law and urged the Government to immediately establish a moratorium on the execution of all death sentences in Iraq.

42. There are currently no reliable statistics on the prison population in Iraqi detention facilities, owing largely to the lack of accurate and transparent reporting on the implementation of the amnesty law by the authorities of Iraq. UNAMI received credible information that some detainees had been rearrested by Iraqi authorities immediately upon their release from detention facilities controlled by the multinational force in Iraq. Meanwhile, the number of detainees in the custody of the force has decreased from more than 15,000 in December 2008 to 12,500 in April 2009.

43. In order to address the issue of overcrowding and improve the poor incarceration conditions in many detention facilities, the Government of Iraq announced a plan to modernize its detention and prison facilities by either building them anew or, where possible, renovating existing ones. While the UNAMI Human Rights Office welcomes the Government's decision, it remains concerned that, unless the effort is complemented by criminal law reforms, a revision of anti-terrorism measures and improved practices concerning the treatment of detainees and trial proceedings, it will fail to ensure the necessary compliance with international human rights standards and fair trial guarantees.

44. Violence against women remained one of the key unaddressed problems throughout Iraq. Honour-related killings and other forms of violence against women continued to be reported as accidents, attempts at suicide or suicide. UNAMI

continued to engage members of the Government of Iraq and national civil society organizations in the process of raising awareness of women's rights and provided support to various initiatives by the national authorities and non-governmental organizations aimed at eradicating honour-related and other forms of violence against women. On 19 and 20 March, the UNAMI Human Rights Office sponsored an international conference attended by Members of Parliament, representatives of line Ministries, including members of the Kurdistan regional government, and international experts. The conference ended with the adoption of recommendations concerning legislative and other measures aimed at instituting better protection mechanisms for women in times of violence and economic hardship.

45. The UNAMI Human Rights Office continued to provide support to Iraqi institutions with the aim of improving their capacity to protect and promote human rights. Fifteen trainers from the Ministry of Interior and Defence received extensive training on human rights principles in international and domestic law. The training took place from February to April in Erbil.

46. The vacuum left by the resignation of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives in December 2008 caused a number of projects to be delayed, including the establishment of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights. The Human Rights Committee of the Council of Representatives requested the Speaker to appoint a committee in charge of the commissioners' recruitment process. As the 2009-2010 Iraqi budget, which was approved in March, did not provide funding for the High Commission, UNAMI urges the Council of Representatives and the Government of Iraq to include budgetary provisions for funding the Commission in the coming midterm budget review in June 2009.

47. In March, the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq approved a UNAMI Human Rights Office project on the training and equipping of a team of experts from the Ministry of Human Rights to lead Government exhumations of mass graves across Iraq. The project, which will complement other transitional justice and reconciliation projects by the Human Rights Office, is expected to give priority to graves with the remains of missing Kuwaiti prisoners of war.

G. Operational, logistic and security issues

48. In line with the Bilateral security agreement, the ongoing transition of security responsibilities from the United States military to the Iraqi Security Forces continues. The United States military has begun to withdraw from a number of bases and joint security stations across the country, and the Iraqi Security Forces are increasingly taking over more domestic security responsibilities. In Baghdad, security restrictions appear to be easing, with many temporary concrete walls being removed from urban areas as part of the broader normalization process. Officials of the Government of Iraq indicate that the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces is sufficient to take over from the departing multinational force. However, armed opposition groups, Al-Qaida and other extremist elements continue to demonstrate the intent and capability to conduct major attacks against Government officials, security forces and the local population. Although there has been a demonstrable reduction in insurgent activity across the country in the past 12 months, there are still armed groups determined to incite sectarian violence and undermine public confidence in the Government's capability to provide effective security.

49. Overall, Kurdistan regional government areas remained stable, thereby allowing a more expansive programme of outreach activities by UNAMI and the United Nations country team. However, there is still a threat of militant elements infiltrating from other regions. In the disputed city of Kirkuk and the surrounding areas, there have been persistent low-level attacks against Iraqi and United States military forces by local armed groups. Particular attention has been paid to the potential increase in intercommunal friction, as well as to the risk of escalating tensions between the Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga forces stationed in the disputed areas of Kirkuk Governorate and northern Diyala. Meanwhile, Iraqi and United States forces launched a new series of joint offensives aimed at Al-Qaida and other militants across Ninawa province. To date, military operations have generally not been as effective in reducing insurgent influence in this area as they have in other provinces. Mosul recorded a weekly average of six to seven mass casualty events per month, including car bombs and suicide-vest attacks, as well as targeted killings of tribal and political leaders.

50. Insurgent activity in Anbar province is still concentrated along the Ramadi-Fallujah corridor, with isolated incidents reported in the vicinity of Al-Qaim (border area) and Hit. Ramadi itself remains reasonably stable, but vehicle and suicide bombers have been consistently targeting Iraqi Security Forces and Awakening Council leaders in and around Fallujah. In Baqubah, insurgents still pose a significant challenge to security forces both in the city and in surrounding rural areas, with even the Provincial Council complex remaining vulnerable, as was demonstrated when a suicide bomber circumvented all security measures to attack a visiting United States delegation.

51. Incident levels remained low across southern Iraq, with the exception of two suicide attacks on pilgrims travelling to Karbala in February, and two car bomb attacks in the northern area of Al-Hillah, one of which targeted and killed members of the Sons of Iraq as they queued to receive their salaries from a Ministry of the Interior office. Continuing security operations in Basra and other major population centres have netted a large number of suspected militants and uncovered significant weapons caches across the region. Interdiction operations against weapons smugglers in Maysan Province in particular have been successful in eliminating thousands of rockets, mortars and improvised bombs. In spite of those successes, both the Iraqi Security Forces and the multinational force continue to face regular attacks by weapons from such caches.

52. The United Nations in Iraq continues to face immense challenges in safeguarding its personnel and assets and in conducting operations owing to the complex and evolving dynamics of the security environment. In that regard, and taking into consideration the required balance between security and programming, UNAMI continued with the development and realignment of its operational capacity to support existing activities and put into place the necessary protective measures to facilitate the envisaged expansion of the Mission, in particular in support of the special agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations. To this end, the UNAMI Security Section engaged not only with the Departments of Safety and Security, Political Affairs and Field Support of the Secretariat, but also actively engaged with the United Nations country team both at Headquarters and at the local level to ensure that the future security posture reflects and meets the actual needs of those agencies.

53. The military advisers provided by Member States to assist the Mission both with its expansion of activities across the governorates and with its liaison with Iraqi and the multinational force remain essential. With the implementation of the bilateral security agreement and the increasing engagement of the Mission with the Iraqi Security Forces, the support provided by the military advisers in conducting joint capability assessments with counterparts, determining the future operational support available and coordinating mechanisms with Iraqi forces as the transition progresses, has significantly helped the UNAMI Security Section in shaping the future concept of operations. On behalf of the Mission, I thank all Member States for their contributions in this regard.

IV. Observations

54. During the reporting period, there were encouraging signs of progress in Iraq. Following the successful and largely peaceful conduct of provincial elections earlier in the year, we witnessed local democratic processes at work with the formation of political alliances to allow the selection of governors and their deputies in each of the 14 governorates that held elections. The hope is that this will serve to promote greater accountability in local governance institutions. In addition, after a long stalemate in the Council of Representatives, an agreement was reached on the selection of a new Speaker of Parliament and on a rigorous plan of work aimed at making progress on critical outstanding legislation essential for the country's recovery. The Iraqi Security Forces also continued to demonstrate their ability to assume greater security responsibilities. Those developments underscore a general positive trend in the country on both the political and security fronts.

55. Nevertheless, many important challenges remain, and further progress is needed in the coming months to ensure that the gains made so far can be sustained. As I have said in my previous reports, national reconciliation remains the main priority in Iraq. In particular, the resolution of key issues, including federalism, the sharing of natural resources and disputed internal boundaries, could serve as a means to achieving lasting peace. Further progress on these complex issues will be possible only if Iraqi leaders come together in a spirit of national unity and adopt much-needed constitutional and legislative measures in the political, electoral, economic and social fields. The delivery of essential services will also be critical to improving the lives of the Iraqi people. In accordance with its mandate, the United Nations continues to support and facilitate the ongoing efforts of Iraq in all those areas.

56. While the Iraqi Security Forces continue to demonstrate their capability to assume an increasing level of responsibility, the continuing attacks against civilians serve as a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges in the security field. I urge all Iraqis not to succumb to the politics of mistrust, intimidation, fear or revenge, but rather to work together to build on the positive achievements made so far.

57. Important electoral processes in Iraq are ongoing, and the Independent High Electoral Commission is preparing for electoral events in 2009 and early 2010. With UNAMI support, the Electoral Commission will be implementing elections in the Kurdistan regional government region in July and carrying out a nationwide voter registration update exercise in August and new Council of Representatives elections in late 2009 or early 2010. The governorate council elections in January were deemed a success by many, and it is hoped that the Independent High Electoral

Commission will build on this solid foundation and deliver further credible electoral events. UNAMI remains committed to the continued provision of technical assistance under its mandate. Its goal is to assist the election commission to be election-ready should any other events be called, such as elections in Kirkuk, possible referendums, and/or district and subdistrict elections.

58. I note with concern rising tensions in several areas, particularly in Ninawa, Kirkuk and Diyala. While I welcome the recent effort to organize joint patrols between the Iraqi Security Forces and the Peshmerga in some disputed areas, much more needs to be done to stabilize the situation. I urge national and local leaders to endeavour to ease tensions and work towards resolving the underlying causes. In this regard, I support the efforts of my Special Representative and UNAMI to facilitate a political dialogue and assist the parties in finding mutually acceptable solutions. In particular, the Mission's report on the disputed internal boundaries of Iraq could serve as a useful starting point for constructive dialogue. I urge Iraqi leaders to use this opportunity to engage in a process aimed at resolving these important issues. UNAMI will continue to work with all stakeholders on possible next steps.

59. At the same time, in support of strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights through transparent and independent institutions, UNAMI intends to promote the Independent High Commission for Human Rights. I would also encourage the Government of Iraq to continue its efforts in the area of judicial reform, especially with respect to the move from a confession-based to an evidence-based justice system. The United Nations stands ready to assist in this important endeavour. However, I regret the recent decision by the Government of Iraq to resume the use of the death penalty in Iraq, and I would urge the Government to reconsider a moratorium.

60. The recovery of Iraq is entering a different phase, with the Government leading the effort and a shift away from a multi-donor trust fund to an emphasis on bilateral donor relations. This new reality calls for a change in the balance and the nature of international support for Iraq, and, from the United Nations perspective, we envisage a much greater focus on sustainable social and economic development. A healthy economy, jobs, services and a functioning government system are the benefits of good democratic governance. To respond to this demand, the special agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations will need to expand their outreach in Iraq. As security improves, it is hoped that the Government of Iraq and the United Nations country team will have a more intensive and policy-based interaction. At the national level, this includes the provision of United Nations technical expertise and international best practices; at the provincial level, it includes United Nations assistance to improve social services and promote job creation. Looking forward, the production of a comprehensive United Nations Development Assistance Framework will help normalize the United Nations country team's relations with Iraq. Such a realignment and expansion of our operations will be a United Nations priority for 2009.

61. The coordination of international assistance to Iraq is an equally important priority, as the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq closes and the International Compact for Iraq approaches its third year of implementation. A strategic review of the country's future coordination mechanisms is both necessary and timely so as to update international strategies within the sovereign context of

Iraq. A dialogue between the Government and donors on how the Compact should be adapted is essential. As co-chair of the Compact, I would encourage an approach that is more streamlined and targeted to the country's socio-economic priorities. In this regard, I welcome the close cooperation between the Government of Iraq and my Special Adviser on the International Compact, Ibrahim Gambari.

62. Resources should also be spent in areas that will make a lasting difference to social and economic revival. For example, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees are a critical priority, and the United Nations will continue to support Iraq to ensure their integration, resettlement and return. However, all the existing evidence suggests that such efforts will not be effective in isolation from much broader initiatives to rebuild livelihoods and services in very poor and conflict-affected communities. I strongly urge Iraq, neighbouring host countries and the international community to work together to address these complex issues.

63. I firmly believe that regional and international cooperation remain essential for the stability and recovery of Iraq and recognise that such initiatives need to be further consolidated. I have been encouraged by the recent series of high-level State visits between Iraq and many of its neighbours. Under its mandate, UNAMI will continue to provide technical expertise and assistance to the Government of Iraq as it engages its neighbours through regional mechanisms and bilateral initiatives on issues of mutual concern. In addition, in its resolution 1859 (2008), the Security Council called for a review of all resolutions pertaining specifically to Iraq, beginning with the adoption of resolution 661 (1990), and requested the Secretary-General to report, after consultations with Iraq, on facts relevant for consideration by the Council of actions necessary for Iraq to achieve international standing equal to that which it held prior to the adoption of such resolutions. I will soon present a report to the Security Council in accordance with resolution 1859 (2008).

64. As the security situation improves, the United Nations will continue to strive to expand its presence and activities in Iraq consistent with the needs of Iraq, as well as its own operational capabilities. However, Iraq remains a challenging operating environment, and the safety and security of United Nations personnel is one of my top priorities. For that reason, the United Nations will continue to depend on Member States for security, logistical, operational and financial support in the foreseeable future. This includes timely investments to improve the Organization's own operational capabilities. I thank the Government of Iraq and the multinational force for their ongoing support of the United Nations presence in Iraq.

65. I would like to express my deep gratitude to all United Nations staff working in Iraq for their tireless efforts. It is a testament to the Organization's commitment to assisting the people of Iraq in rebuilding their nation at this critical juncture in history. I would like to express my appreciation to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, David Shearer, who recently left the Mission. Thanks to his efforts, United Nations activities in the humanitarian, reconstruction and development fields are better aligned with the country's own priorities. I also commend the active leadership of my Special Representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, who will leave the Mission shortly. Under challenging conditions, his personal efforts to promote political dialogue, especially with respect to disputed internal boundaries and ensuring the success of the recent provincial elections, deserve particular recognition.